DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 418 123 TM 028 217

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TITLE A Review and Critique of the Preschool IDEA Oral Language Test (Pre-IPT): Spanish.
PUB DATE 1998-01-22
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association (Houston, TX, January 22, 1998).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Bilingual Education; Bilingual Students; Diagnostic Tests; *Hispanic Americans; *Language Proficiency; *Language Tests; Norms; *Oral Language; *Preschool Children; Preschool Education; Spanish; *Spanish Speaking; Student Evaluation; Test Reliability; Test Use; Test Validity

ABSTRACT

The Preschool IDEA Oral Language Proficiency Test: Spanish (Pre-IPT:Spanish) developed by W. Williams and E. Dalton (1989) purports to determine the level of oral language proficiency for preschool children, aged 3 to 5 years. The instrument is designed to identify the dominant language of bilingual or primarily Spanish-speaking children, and the developers indicate that it can be used as a diagnostic tool to help educators determine the appropriate language of instruction for the child. Information is given about the costs of various test packages and other publication data. Testing requires some practice to orient the child to the test format and to establish rapport. The norming study in 1989 was based on responses of 312 children. Reliability and validity studies were conducted as the test was developed. Overall, the Pre-IPT:Spanish seems to be an adequate measure of Spanish oral proficiency. It is appealing to the age for which it was constructed, and is easy to score and interpret. Scores across subjects were consistent, but validity results provide little support of the ability of the Pre-IPT:Spanish to measure verbal performance. The test should therefore be used as part of a more thorough language evaluation battery. It is also noted that the norming sample apparently did not include any special population children; the test is therefore a representation of language development in normal children. (Contains two references.) (SLD)

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A Review and Critique of the Preschool IDEA Oral Language Test (Pre-IPT): Spanish

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EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

TMO28217

A paper presented at the annual meeting of the
Southwest Educational Research Association
Houston, Texas
January 22,1998

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Title: Preschool IDEA Oral Language Proficiency Test: Spanish
Authors: Constance O. Williams and Enrique F. Dalton
Publisher: Ballard & Tighe, Publishers
Publication Date: 1989
Acronym: Pre-IPT: Spanish
Administration: Individual
Other Editions: English edition available
Administration Time: 5 to 20 minutes
Price Data, 1997: $110 per complete kit; including (50) test booklets, (1) background board, story pieces, examiner's manual, technical manual, (50) level summaries and (10) group lists; (50) test booklets - $31.00, (1) background board - $22.00, story pieces - $18.00, examiner's manual - $17.00, technical manual - $24.00, (50) level summaries - $8.75, (10) group lists - $5.75

PURPOSE AND NATURE OF TEST

Given that there is no published reviews of the Pre-IPT: Spanish, it is this reviewer's intention to provide an objective review that helps test users identify the appropriate uses and limitations of the Pre-IPT: Spanish for use with Spanish-speaking preschool children. The Pre-IPT: Spanish test purports to determine the level of oral language proficiency for preschool age children, ages three to five years old (Williams & Dalton, 1989). The instrument is designed to identify the dominant language (the language the child uses most for communicating and to satisfy personal needs) of bilingual or primarily Spanish-speaking preschoolers. The authors also state that the Pre-IPT can be used as a diagnostic tool to help educators ascertain the appropriate language of instruction for a bilingual or Spanish monolingual preschooler.

The complete Pre-IPT packet includes 50 test booklets, a background board, story pieces, examiner's manual, technical manual, 50 level summaries, and 10 group lists. The Pre-IPT is an individually administered test. The administration is performed entirely in Spanish by an examiner fluent in Spanish. Administration time can range from 5 to 20 minutes depending on when a ceiling score is reached. The items consist of 40 visual and verbal stimuli organized in sequential and developmental levels of difficulty. The test assesses four Spanish oral language skills:

vocabulary, comprehension, grammar/syntax, and verbal expression. These four skills demonstrate a child's ability to use oral language in an expressive and receptive manner.

Practical Evaluation

For the testing session it is necessary to have the test booklet, background board, story pieces and a small box. The background board serves as the stage for testing which is presented to the child in a story/play format. The background board depicts the scene of a park and uses bright, vibrant colors that are visually attractive. It is a sturdy cardboard game board that folds in four and is likely to withstand the wear and tear associated with preschool play. The story pieces, which include a family of four, two dogs, three trees and food for a picnic, are attractively colored and placed on foam backings that provide added support and sturdiness.

The test booklet is arranged in an efficient and well-organized format. It is divided into four levels of difficulty and each page is divided into four sections. From left to right, the first column in each page is labeled Story Pieces. This column notes the point at which the examiner adds named story pieces to the background board and shows where in the picture to place the pieces. By referring to either pictures # 1, # 2 or # 3 that are found on the corresponding pages the examiner knows where to place each piece. The next column titled Examiner says gives every question or statement that the examiner is to say. Extra directions for the examiner are displayed right under the questions or statements in parentheses and written in script. It also provides supplementary prompts or queries for when the child does not respond as indicated in the Child responds column. The column titled Child responds shows the acceptable responses for which the child can receive credit. The last column provides small boxes for marking the responses as either correct or incorrect. The examiner's manual thoroughly explains how to score the test taker's responses.

There is a set of sample questions at the beginning of the test booklet which should be administered to the child to help orient him/her with the test format. All test takers begin with the first ten items. The examiner sums the number of incorrect responses. The total of incorrect responses is compared to information in the score box which tells the examiner whether to continue testing because the child is capable of continuing or to end because a ceiling has been obtained. In a similar manner the examiner will continue assessing the child's performance by scoring the responses and using the information in the score box to determine how to proceed. The child receives a score level of "A, B, C, D or E" which is dependent on the number of incorrect responses obtained on the last section tested. The Group List forms are provided to help summarize group information gathered from Pre-IPT testing.

The examiner's manual suggests attending an inservice prior to administering the Pre-IPT but no information on how or where to attend this inservice is provided. However, the examiner's manual in combination with the test booklet, provides enough information to administer, score, and interpret performance on the test. It is advised that the examiner give at least one practice administration to become familiar and comfortable with administration procedures. Since the test takers are young children it is also advised to help the child relax by relating to him/her in a friendly and playful manner. Establishing rapport helps motivate the child and increases the likelihood that he/she will complete the applicable section. The test appears to have face validity because verbal expression is assessed for each item which the child responds to verbally, grammar is assessed through verbal interaction between the examiner and the test taker, and comprehension is assessed for every item by the child's verbal or non-verbal responses.

Technical Evaluation

The norming study for the Pre-IPT took place in the Spring of 1989 on a total of 312

preschool/Headstart program students in California (n=264) and Texas (n=48). The sample ranged from 3.00 - 5.06 years old with fewer than 25 participants in ages 3.00-3.05 (n=8), 3.06-3.11 (n=14), and 4.00-4.05 (n=24). Norms based on such a small sample sizes can not be assumed to be representative of the population under consideration. There were 139 males and 173 females. The predominant ethnic group was Hispanic (n=308). The primary language of the children was as follows: 298 Spanish, 9 English, 5 other. Surveys inquiring on teacher's opinions of the child's academic ability, primary language ability and English language ability were collected. However, there were 149, 53, and 50 children whose data were missing for each of the respective surveys. Teachers were also asked to predict at which level of performance they expected the child to place on the Pre-IPT. The surveys were used in the validity studies.

The correlation between the child's age and score level "A, B, C, D, E" designates whether the child is identified as Non-Spanish Speaking (NSS), Limited Spanish Speaking (LSS) or Fluent Spanish Speaking (FSS). The intersection between the two strands yields a designation of NSS, LSS or FSS. Table R on page 22 of the technical manual illustrates this designation chart. The FSS designations are based on the total combined population of 3 and 4-year-old grade designations combined and the 5-year-old designation. A child is designated as FSS if he/she scores at or above the median score in the norming study. The NSS designations were determined by reviewing the same data and identifying the levels at which students performed at the low end of the continuum. Cut-off points for LSS designations are not discussed. Item analysis revealed an average P value of .72 with a standard deviation of 8.48.

The reliability of the Pre-IPT was assessed using interitem consistency, test-retest reliability and the interrater method. The degree of homogeneity between items within the test obtained by using Cronbach's Alpha was .93 (n=312). A Split-Half analysis revealed a correlation of .72

between the two halves and a Spearman-Brown coefficient equal to .84. The test-retest reliability, using only 60 observations, obtained one week apart was .82. These results provide evidence of the Pre-IPT's consistency across subject's scores.

Four types of validity analysis were conducted. With regard to content validity, of the 40 items on the test, 100% assess vocabulary, 100% assess comprehension, 31% assess grammar/syntax and 28% assess verbal expression. Appendix A on page 13 of the examiner's manual provides a matrix of test items by skill area and developmental level. However, it should be noted that figures in the manual are presented for 42 items, but there are only 40 items on the test. It appears that the test authors calculated the percentages using 42 items, which is the amount of items in the Pre-IPT: English test. Furthermore, the item selection was conducted solely by the test authors, consultation with subject-matter experts was not obtained. Two studies were conducted relating to criterion-related validity. An analysis of the relationship between teacher prediction of Pre-IPT level and actual Pre-IPT level (n=245) resulted in a correlation coefficient of .65. The correlation between teacher's opinion of each child's oral language ability in Spanish and actual Pre-IPT performance (n=257) was .36. Taken together, these results provide evidence of concurrent validity.

The construct validity study looked at several relationships. The relationship between age and Pre-IPT results (n=310) yielded a Chi-Square of 120.88, a contingency coefficient of .53, and a Pearson correlation of .37. The correlation between the Socio-Maturational Age Classification and Pre-IPT was .36. A Pearson correlation of .25 (n=163) was obtained between teacher opinion on academic ability and Pre-IPT results. These results provide only modest support of the Pre-IPT's validity.

Summary Evaluation

In summary, the Pre-IPT: Spanish seems to be an adequate measure of Spanish oral proficiency. It is appealing to the age for which it was constructed and is easy to score and interpret. The test proved to have consistent scores across subjects. Validity results, however, provide little support of the Pre-IPT's ability to measure verbal performance. Therefore, the test should be used as part of a more thorough language evaluation battery.

The apparent technical support is further diminished by such a small and restricted sample size. It is a concern that the norming sample was restricted to only two geographical locations, California (n=264) and Texas (n=48). Due to the large variation of dialects within the Spanish speaking population, children from different Hispanic backgrounds are likely to misinterpret items or give responses that are not listed as acceptable. For example, an orange, which is mentioned in one of the test items, is named differently in various Spanish dialects; yet, no modifications for scoring are suggested. Thus, the test developers failed to account for language variations due to dialectical differences rendering some items biased against non-standard dialects. It is also this reviewer's opinion that a norming sample obtained primarily from one section of California is not an accurate representative sample of the Spanish speaking preschool population in the United States. Therefore, creating local norms is suggested.

The instrument can be of use for preschool and kindergarten programs that need to assess children's language ability for purposes of program placement. The Pre-IPT: English, which was not reviewed, is also available to assess the dominant language of bilingual or monolingual English speaking students. However, the lack of parallel forms for either test that would provide different stimuli and stories for pre- and post-test purposes limits the tests usefulness in program planning because results on the post-test may be influenced due to repeated practice with the same stimuli.

There is no mention in the manual if any special population children were in the norming sample. The lack of representation of exceptional children in the norming sample provides an inaccurate picture of the range of preschool Spanish language development; it is actually only a representation of language development in normal children. In addition, there was also a very small representative sample for ages 3 to 4.5 years old. Lastly, there were a couple of critical misprints found in the technical manual that give reason to believe that not much care was put into writing the manual.

References

Williams, W. O., & Dalton, E. F. (1989). Preschool IDEA oral language proficiency test: Spanish examiner's manual. Brea, CA: Ballard & Tighe.

Williams, W. O., & Dalton, E. F. (1989). Preschool IDEA oral language proficiency test: Spanish technical manual. Brea, CA: Ballard & Tighe.

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